

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 NEAE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

ACDA-05 DHA-02 OMB-01 SAM-01 EA-07 /096 W

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O P 291500Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7535

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 0487

KUWAIT ALSO PLS PASS BAGHDAD

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MO, SS, SP, MR, AG, UR

SUBJECT: MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN CLASHES - WHERE WILL THEY LEAD ?

SUMMARY.

BARRING ALGERIAN INITIATION OF GENERAL HOSTILITIES, WE FORESEE CONTINUATION LOCALIZED CLASHES INSIDE SAHARA FOR NEXT FEW DAYS, AS SAHARA-FOCUSSED GOM PROCEEDS WITH SWEEPS. FOLLOWING THAT, GOM LIKELY TO PAUSE BEFORE UNDERTAKING LAST PHASE OF SAHARA CONSOLIDATION IN SENSITIVE MAHBES AREA. GIVEN MOROCCAN-MILITARY SUPERIORITY IN SAHARA AND IN SOUTHERNMOST MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN BORDER AREAS, WE SEE ANY MAJOR ALGERIAN MILITARY EFFORT LIMITED TO THIS AREA AS UNLIKELY. MEANWHILE, WOULD-BE ARAB MEDIATORS SCURRYING ABOUT, WITH PROSPECTS OF SUCCESS CLOUDY EXCEPT FOR POSSIBLY INDUCING SOME RESTRAINT. SAHARA DISPUTE HAS NOT "INTERNATIONALIZED", AND THERE NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY CUBANS, VIETNAMESE, OR MORE THAN A FEW SOVIETS ARE ANYWHERE NEARER SAHARA THAN TINDOUF. INDEED, AS SEEN FROM HERE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE TRYING HARD TO PRESERVE RELATIONS WITH GOM. WE SEE INITIATIVE AS TO WHETHER THERE WAR OR PEACE IN NEAR FUTURE AS LYING WITH ALGERIA. END SUMMARY.

1. MILITARY OUTLOOK. GOM ISSUED COMMUNIQUE LATE JANUARY 28 ACKNOWLEDGING THAT FIGHTING BETWEEN ALGERIAN AND MOROCCAN UNITS HAD CONTINUED FOR SECOND DAY. COMMUNIQUE CLAIMED 17 NEW ALGERIAN ARMY PRISONERS FOR TOTAL OF 29. IT LISTED CAPTIVES' NAMES AND CHARGED ALGERIANS USING "HEAVY ARMAMENTS AND ARTILLERY" IN FIGHTING. GOM SOURCES ADVISED EMBASSY MORNING JAN 29 THAT AMGALA FIGHTING STILL UNDERWAY AND THAT ALGERIAN PRISONER TOTAL UP TO 50.

2. PRESENT FIGHTING COMES AS GOM CONTINUES ITS METHODICAL MILITARY SWEEPS INTO AREAS OF SAHARA HERETOFORE UNDER POLISARIO CONTROL. ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, CURRENT PHASE OF OPERATION EXPECTED TO MOVE EASTWARD FROM AMGALA, FIRST TOWARD TIFARITI AND PERHAPS LATER ON TO BIR LEHLOU. THERE IS SOME UNCERTAINTY ABOUT GOM PLANS AFTER THIS. MAHBES, WHICH HAS TAKEN ON BOTH STRATEGIC AND SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE, WOULD BE OBVIOUS SUBSEQUENT TARGET IN STRICTLY MILITARY SENSE AND A PLAN APPARENTLY EXISTS FOR A SWEEP IN THAT DIRECTION IN LATER PHASE. HOWEVER, GOM OFFICIALS HAVE REPEATEDLY DEMONSTRATED  
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AWARENESS OF ALGERIAN SENSITIVITIES INVOLVING ANY MOVE ON MAHBES. MOROCCAN FORCES NOW OPERATING IN SAHARA REPORTEDLY HAVE CLEAR GROUND RULES WHICH DESIGNED KEEP THEM SAFE DISTANCE AWAY FROM BOTH MAHBES AND ALGERIAN BORDER. OUR BEST INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT HERE IS THAT CURRENT PHASE OF OPERATION EXPECTED TO CONTINUE AT LEAST ANOTHER WEEK, BUT IT NOT CLEAR WHETHER GOM ENVISAGES PAUSE THEREAFTER.

3. IN THIS TIMEFRAME, IF PRESENT PATTERNS HOLD, CLASHES BETWEEN MOROCCAN AND ALGERIAN UNITS IN AREA ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE, AS ARE CASUALTIES AND CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS. WE ESTIMATE THAT MOROCCANS HAVE CONSIDERABLE MILITARY SUPERIORITY INSIDE SAHARA ITSELF, AND FAVORABLE BALANCE IN SOUTH IN GENERAL VICINITY TINDOUF AREA. DESPITE PRESENCE OF AT LEAST ONE REINFORCED ALGERIAN BRIGADE IN TRI-BORDER AREA, MOROCCAN SUPERIORITY THERE AND LIKELY LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS FOR ALGERIANS WOULD LEAD US NOT TO EXPECT ALGERIANS TO INITIATE MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN THIS LIMITED AREA. FOR THEIR PART, MOROCCANS AT PRESENT FOCUSING ON CONSOLIDATING HOLD ON SAHARA AND WOULD SEEMINGLY HAVE NO INTEREST IN KICKING OFF MORE GENERALIZED FIGHTING WITH ALGERIANS. MOROCCANS, HOWEVER, ARE EXTREMELY VULNERABLE FURTHER NORTH FOR ATTACK FROM BECHAR INTO KSAR ES SOUK AREA, OR IN OUJDA AREA. OUR JUDGMENT IS THAT IF ALGERIANS WERE TO CHOOSE TO INITIATE ANY MAJOR EFFORT THEY WOULD PROBABLY MOVE IN ONE OR BOTH OF THESE AREAS.

4. A FUTURE MOROCCAN THRUST ON TINDOUF AT SOME FUTURE POINT IN CASE OF MORE GENERALIZED FIGHTING CANNOT BE RULED OUT, BUT AS LONG AS ALGERIA MAINTAINS SUPERIORITY TO THE NORTH, SUCH A MOVE WOULD SEEM UNLIKELY TO ARISE FROM PRESENT TACTICAL SITUATION. BOTH SIDES PROBABLY FEEL ANY ALL-OUT WAR WOULD BE SHORT, AND IN RAPIDLY DETERIORATING SITUATION EITHER MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO OBTAIN SWIFT TERRITORIAL ADVANTAGE. MOROCCO'S OUTSTANDING TERRITORIAL CLAIM ON THE TINDOUF AREA IS A FACTOR IN ITS THINKING, AS ARE ALGERIA'S SUSPICIONS OF MOROCCAN INTENTIONS IN ITS OWN.

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O P 291500Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7536

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE  
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 RABAT 0487

KUWAIT ALSO PLS PASS BAGHDAD

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

5. AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN COMING DAYS IS THE EFFECT  
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GROWING NUMBER OF CASUALTIES WILL HAVE ON MOROCCAN USE OF ITS  
FROCES. WHILE CASUALTIES COULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE EFFECT OF  
REDUCING SCOPE OF OPERATIONS TO MORE CONSERVATIVE LEVELS IT  
OUR JUDGMENT OF MOOD OF MOROCCAN OFFICERS AND MEN THAT CASUALTIES  
WILL HAVE OPPOSITE EFFECT, GENERATING PRESSURES FOR MORE AGGESSIVE  
POSTURE TOWARDS ALGERIAN FOES.

6. DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY: FRANTIC MOVES ON DIPLOMATIC FRONT  
SAW KING SPEAKING ON TELEPHONE JAN. 27 WITH EGYPT'S SADAT,  
TUNISIA'S BOURGUIBA, KUWAIT'S SHEIKH SALEM AS SABAH, AND  
SYRIA'S ASSAD. MEANWHILE HIGH LEVEL ENVOYS FROM EGYPT, SYRIA,  
AND IRAQ MAKING STOPS IN ALGIERS AND RABAT. EGYPT SENDING VP  
HUSNI MUBARAK; FROM IRAQ CAME MININFO TARIQ AZIZ; SYRIA SENT  
DEP PRIMIN FOR ECONOMY MOHAMED HAYDAR AND MILITARY CHIEF  
OF STAFF MAJOR GENERAL SHIHABI. SYRIAN AND IRAQI DELEGATIONS  
ARRIVED EVENING JAN. 28. IT DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, TO SEE CONCRETE  
EFFECT NUMEROUS ARAB EMISSARIES CAN HAVE ON POSSIBLE SETTLE-  
MENT EXCEPT PERHAPS TO HELP INDUCE RESTRAINT. OUR BEST BET AT  
THIS POINT FOR POSSIBLE MEDIATOR ROLE WOULD BE EGYPT'S SADAT,  
BUT WHETHER COMMONGROUND FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PARTIES  
EXISTS AT THIS POINT NOT CLEAR. MOROCCO FOR THE SHORT TERM

WANTS TIME TO CONSOLIDATE IN SAHARA. ALGERIA MAY SEE ITS INTEREST  
IN KEEPING THINGS STIRRED UP.

7. SAHARA AN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT? WE AGREE WITH CONCLUSIONS  
ALGIERS 0193 THAT CONFLICT HAS YET TO ASSUME ANGOLA PATTERNS.  
KING HASSAN TOLD ADMIRAL TURNER SAHARA WAS IN "PRE-ANGOLA"  
CONFIGURATION (RABAT 0374). IT IS PROBABLE THAT WHEN  
HE TALKED ABOUT CUBAN AND VIETNAMESE TECHNICIANS, AS WELL AS  
SOVIETS, HE WAS PRIMARILY ADDRESSING A CONDITION HE FEARED  
WOULD COME ABOUT IN THE FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE RATHER THAN THE PRESENT  
SITUATION. IN FACT, BEST AVAILABLE INFO SUGGESTS TO US THAT THERE  
ARE NO THIRD COUNTRY TECHNICIANS NOW IN SAHARA AND PROBABLY  
NOT MORE THAN A FEW SOVIET TECHNICIANS IN TINDOUF. FURTHERMORE,  
WE CONTINUE TO BE STRUCK BY PROFESSED RESTRAINT OF SOVIETS HERE  
ON DISPUTE. THEIR EVERY MOVE ON MOROCCAN SIDE HAS BEEN  
DESIGNED FOSTER CONTINUANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS HERE (SEE SOVIET  
AMB'S REMARKS RABAT 0434).

8. CONCLUSIONS: ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY SITUATION HAS UNDERGONE  
A SERIOUS ESCALATION WITH DIRECT CONFLICT BETWEEN MOROCCAN  
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AND ALGERIAN FORCES NOW UNDERWAY WITHIN LIMITED SAHARA CONTEXT,  
IT IS OUR JUDGMENT THAT FIGHTING WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO BE  
CONTAINED FOR NEXT FEW DAYS. GOM WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE  
SWEEPS, STOPPING BEFORE FINAL MAHBES PHASE TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK  
AT DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY SITUATION BEFORE--AS IS PROBABLE--  
PROCEEDING WITH SAHARA MOPUP. AT THAT POINT, FURTHER ESCALATION  
WILL BE PRIMARILY UP TO ALGERIANS AND ARAB DIPLOMACY MAY HAVE  
ITS DAY, IF ALGERIANS THEN WISH TO NEGOTIATE WAY OUT. IT HARD FOR US  
SEE WHAT ELSE ALGERIANS CAN DO BESIDES NEGOTIATING AT THAT STAGE,  
UNLESS THEY WILLING TO BE SEEN AS INITIATING A GENERAL WAR WITH  
MOROCCO.  
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## Message Attributes

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